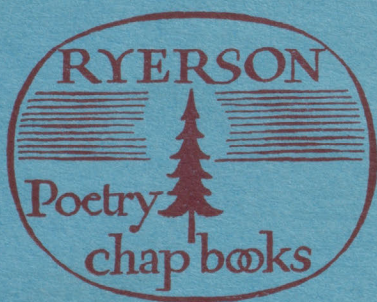


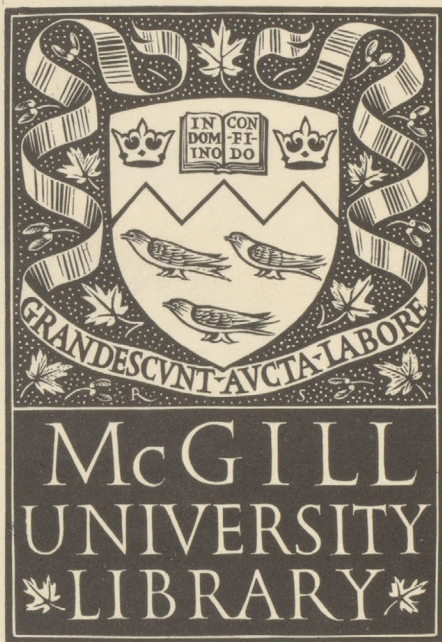
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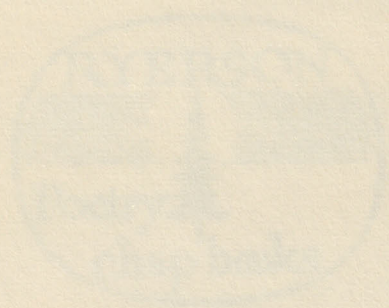
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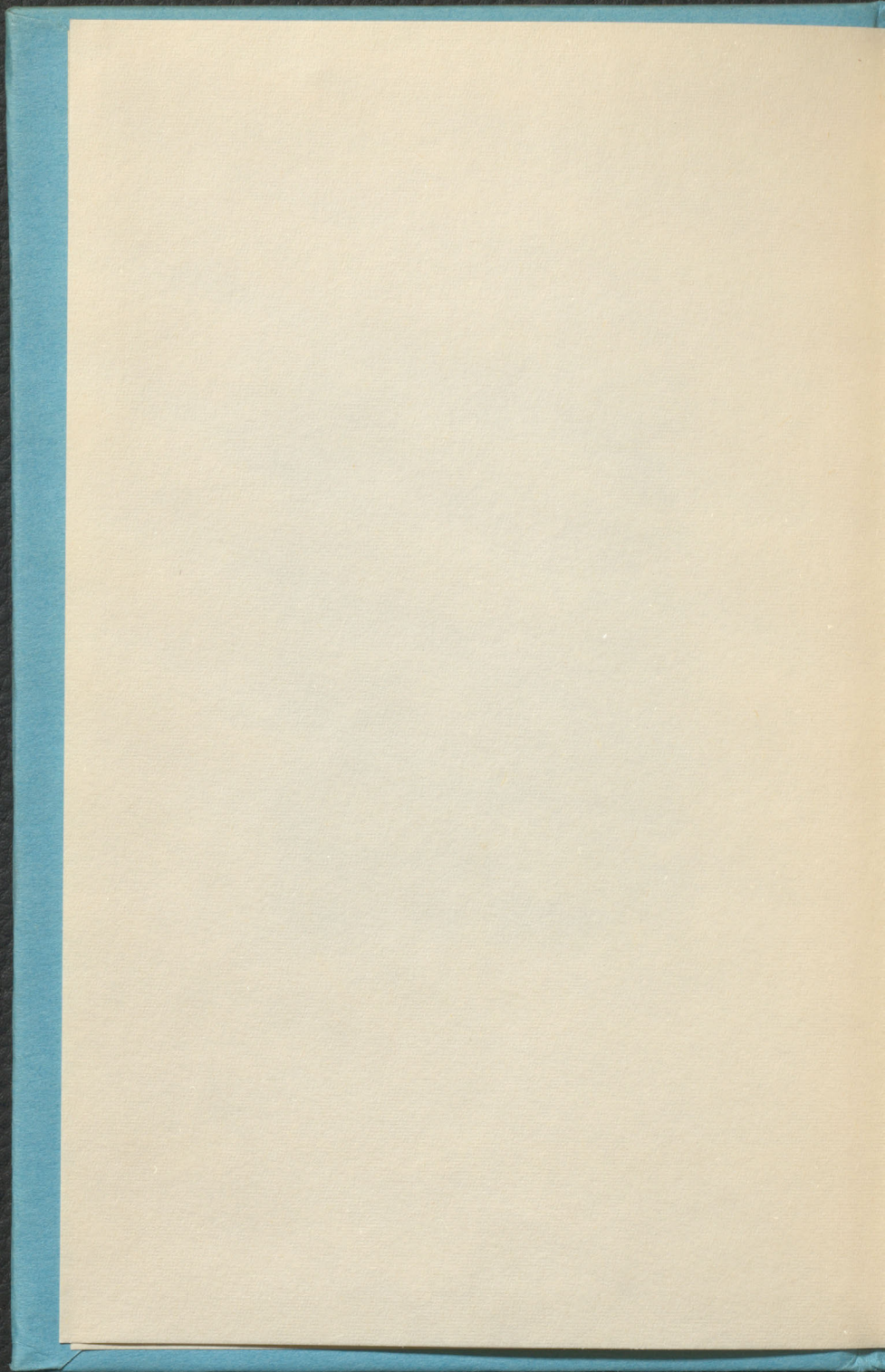
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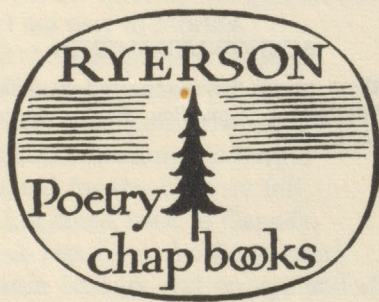


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And See Penelope  
Plain

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FRED SWAYZE, TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES  
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FOR BEULAH

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# And See Penelope Plain

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## AND SEE PENELOPE PLAIN

PLAYING the sunshine days away,  
He puttered at golf, lobbed at tennis,  
Hunched over checkers with transient friends,  
Was shuffle bored, and bowled his way  
Up and down the continent  
One jump ahead of chilly weather,  
And went where all good Canadians go,  
When wealthy and wise, to avoid the snow.

His wife, uprooted from her home,  
Torn from her church, and girlhood friends,  
Knitted her way to Florida,  
Knitted through the Mardi Gras,  
Knitted under pine and palm,  
By checker board and bowling green.  
A peripatetic Madame de Farge,  
She waited for the blow to fall  
To let her come back to Canada,  
Freed at last from the long safari,  
To church bazaars and groups and clubs  
And societies, mainly missionary.

### *SUDDENLY AT HIS RESIDENCE*

STARTLED by the summons,  
He gripped the arms of his chair  
With straining fingers.  
Gently he settled back  
Softly, without a sigh,  
And was dead.  
So indecisive he had been  
That meekly he passed through life  
Invisibly.  
Death almost forgot him,  
But recollecting, beckoned  
Casually.

### *THE NORTH WIND DOTH BLOW*

LEFT on a lonely island to die  
The old woman does not hear the angry  
Slap of driven waves on the stones  
Or the moan of the pines torn by the wind  
Although she holds the worn blanket  
Shawl-like close against the cold  
And stares blindly over the gray lake  
Her eyes filmed with the milky iridescence  
Of great age, blind with the tears of weakness.  
After the pain will come resignation.  
After the bitterness and crying  
Will come the quiet. Old, old,  
And at last a burden to her people,  
Left to die in a hungry year  
When the tribe moved to the winter camp.



Hidden in a shabby genteel home  
For the aged, a Victorian mansion crumbling  
With dry rot on a pseudo respectable street  
Convenient to street car and subway  
Reasonable rates five dollars a day  
The old ladies stay meekly in their rooms  
Reasonably cold, reasonably starved  
Apathetic to the dullness and dust  
The dirt and the musty smell of weakness.  
Out of sight and out of mind, their world  
A chair, a bed and a bureau drawer  
They sit quietly, decently dying.

The thin bitter wind that rattles  
The black branches of the respectable maples  
Is all that is left of a northern blast  
That swept over forests, mountains and gray lakes  
And roared in the pines of lonely islands.

### CAEDMON, SING ME SOMETHING OF THE NATIONAL POTENTIAL

"This is precisely what I mean by most of our poets not taking advantage of the national potential. There is something in the national climate today that will leave its mark on any truly sensitive writer's work. I believe that it can be felt and recognized and yet I hardly ever find it in our poetry."

James Scott, in the *Ottawa Journal*, Dec. 26, 1953.

GREAT Scott! How insensitive can a poet get?  
And will John Fisher be our laureate yet?  
Of what men shall our Canadian Virgils sing,  
Aberhart, Henry Holt, and Mackenzie King?



Or shall we discuss apartness with a Negro in Dresden,  
Inviolable rights with a Japanese Canadian,  
Brotherly love with a Jew buying a cottage,  
Independence and a mess of American pottage?

I'll compose you a sonnet, dear James, with maple leaves  
on it,

An ode on combines, discreetly, in the modern mode,  
A triolet gracefully limning Houde as a violet,  
An epic on Duplessis and the liquor traffic,  
An epigram on the Star and Telegram,  
A terza rima on Chalk River and Hiroshima,  
A lyric on Social Credit, a panegyric  
On wages in bargain basements, a squib for sages  
Who serve on Royal Commissions and deserve  
What they get. I'll write you a rondeau, lest we forget  
Company towns and the nation's economy.  
We can tunnel a mountain, drain a lake, and funnel  
A river for power, lay down a pipe line and give her  
The gas, or build a sky scraper in concrete and glass.

A poet can lord it grandly from Border to Pole,  
And what shall it profit him, if he lose his own soul?



## THE DROWNING

GRAY green water surged and swept  
Boiling and swirling under the ledge  
Of waxen ice that it sullenly lipped,  
Smoothing and blunting the jagged edge.

A crusted rim of crumbling slush  
Grayly edged the widening stain  
That girdled the ragged open wound  
Star-fracturing the river plain.

Sighing, the tired wind stooped to the snow,  
Slowly whirling a spiral that lifted,  
Floated, a smoke-gray phantom, to go  
Fading and thinning as it drifted.

The terrified child who was left alone,  
Frightened by silence, wide of eye,  
Turned from the river towards his home,  
And as he ran began to cry.

O GOD! O OTTAWA!

"Ottawa, the Federal capital, exercises no cultural influence at all; it is simply a rookery of civil servants . . . Once the talented and ambitious young writer has realized how stultifying is the narrow environment to which he is committed, he begins to long for London."

—from an article in *The Literary Supplement of The London Times*.

LONDON calling. Big Ben booms through the fog.  
"The Thunderer" has spoken with the voice of God  
And Ottawa trembles. The National Gallery glooms  
Darkly behind its Windsor Castle façade.  
The Film Board, mindful of the grandeur of the dooms  
Of the valiant dead whispers hoarsely, "Is that bad?"  
And decamps to Montreal. The CBC  
Withers and dies, and is sold to private stations;  
Television grows like the green bay tree.  
The anonymous civil servants who write the Nation's  
Speeches, pamphlets, booklets and throw-aways  
Bear up to this note of customary praise;  
But poets are stricken, novelists sicken, and music  
Hath a dying fall. The stage is sick.

A good job done, the *Times*' critic, worthy wight,  
Elegant in spats, walks forth to dine  
On cold boiled mutton, two vegs, and gooseberry tart  
With bilious custard—and it damn well serves him right!



## TORONTO

CITY of contrasts, city of the cold shoulder,  
Hog town, divisional point, and Hub of Empire,  
They tell me you want to be loved, and I believe them;  
Some of the nicest people live quietly there.  
They tell me you are big, and I believe them  
After journeys jammed in crowded cars and subway.  
Unlike the amoeba, you grow without dividing;  
Saturn-like, you devour the children you spawn.  
They tell me you are wicked, and I believe them,  
Though I walked down Jarvis Street and nothing  
happened.

Mere size creates the ills that a city is heir to,  
And your sins of omission stink in the nostrils of God.  
You seek to atone for indifference by giving monies  
To the Fresh Air Fund, by giving five loaves and two  
fishes  
To the Scott Mission and the Salvation Army Hostels,  
Expecting them to perform the miracle of charity;  
By Sunday sports to please the malcontents.

O God! O Toronto! Too many skyscrapers,  
Too few street-cleaners. While the morning-coated ushers  
Reap the harvest at Timothy Eaton Memorial,  
The derelicts scavenge the curbs at Queen and Yonge.  
The girls of Havergal and the York Knitting Mills,  
The Beanery Gang and Tron-o Varsity  
Do not play in the same league or ever meet in the play-  
downs.



The eddying winds, trapped in the canyon maze  
Of unfriendly grimy walls, swirl and scatter  
The debris and litter that hurrying crowds grind  
To a gritty dust. The open drain of the dirty Don  
Is camouflaged by willows and one lone gull.

*QUEEN'S PARK: 8 a.m.*

A SUDDEN storm cloud of pigeons  
dull blue and sullen gray  
settled about the feet  
of the derelict on the bench.  
Deliberately he broke  
bread into bits which he threw  
with calculated fairness  
as though he were St. Francis  
preaching a gospel of crumbs.  
Then he folded his coat for a pillow,  
put his feet on the bench and slept.  
Decently screened by shrubs  
the caretakers burned the litter,  
that the eyes of hurrying men  
might not be reproached and offended  
by the waste of yesterday.



## WITHIN OUR GATES

"I was a stranger, and ye took me in."—*St. Matthew.*

ALLOCATE the D.P's. Teach them respect  
For Canada. If they start to bellyache,  
Let them go back where they came from. Here they make  
A damn good thing of it! What do they expect?

Set the scholar ploughing. Hand a shovel  
To the violinist, and pick-axe, saw and hammer  
To the lawyer and engineer on construction jobs.  
Turn the mechanic loose on milking machines.  
Intern the surgeon; apprentice the journeyman;  
Bind out the farm boys; indenture the stenographers  
And concert artists to domestic service. The price  
Of Canadian citizenship is sweated labour.  
The vote is an Indian gift in exchange for *corvée*  
By the Wops, Bohunks, Squareheads, Polocks and Kikes.

## SMALL-TOWN EDITOR

ACQUAINTED with saints, confessor of publicans,  
Privy to all the hopes and fears of Council,  
He is not ungrateful for felony and crimes  
Contrary to the laws of God and man.  
As sensitive to alarm as collie or gander,  
If wounded, he bleeds printer's ink in an agony  
Of editorial passion that rouses the blood.  
Jubilant, he lavishes adjectives  
With the actor's flair for flamboyance. Hailed the fellow  
Of odd fish, old timers, boosters and advertisers,  
He charges the transient with significance  
And the trivial with portentousness. He is  
The town crier, public conscience, and sentinel,  
Pledged to love and honour, obey and tell.



## POPPY

THE poppy flaunts her harlotries  
with painted face  
to entertain the casual bees  
outface the sun and mock the breeze  
with sinuous grace.  
The hectic in her cheek  
the wages due  
the mortal moralist  
for scarlet sin and naughty deeds  
As though the gaudy poppy knew  
that the dry rattle of black seeds  
within the pelvic cage  
outlasted good and evil and the rage  
of philosophies.

## SPRING SONG

SPRING, Spring, profligate Spring,  
Is a walloping trollop with breasts aswing,  
Splay-footed, squelching the mud through her toes,  
Lustily laughing as Northward she goes  
Yanking the blankets from shivering grasses,  
Slapping the maples and elms as she passes.

Wholeheartedly pagan, amused and exhorting,  
She spreads the contagion of vigorous courting.  
The sluttish and ruttish replenish the earth;  
The profile in fashion is matronly girth.  
Her boldly emblazoned heraldic crest  
Is a tiptoe cockerel thumping his chest.



## *THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT*

SUMMONED home, I saw in the wasted face  
The bony prominence of the common skull  
Stretching the skin, the dry white strands of hair  
About the hollow temples, the fallen jaw  
And sunken eyes, as though the stained brown linen  
Had been cut away from Nefertiti's head  
Baring the desert devastation of Egypt,  
Brittle death beneath the golden mask.

On Darien between eternities,  
A lost Atlantis and the pacific wasteland,  
As though from the dust, her amused voice said,  
"If they would let me alone, I would soon be better  
And be out of here in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail."

Here, Nefertiti, is immortality!

## *DIVINE UNREST*

THE life that begins at forty  
is not L'Allegro's golden mean,  
serene, untroubled by prostate,  
ulcers, thinning hair, sclerosis,  
and premonitions of fate.  
That restless yearning, in my diagnosis,  
is not a second renaissance  
or recurrence of adolescence  
but good old-fashioned divine unrest,  
the urge to do something before it is too late.

By fifty, a man to be blest  
must wrestle with the recording angel  
though his thigh and times be out of joint  
and write his testament of protest



against the anonymity  
and conformity of death  
and reject, to make his point,  
senility as a welcome opiate.

I would rather draw a bison  
on a cave wall in Auvergne,  
carve a totem pole,  
beat a magic drum  
until the rains come,  
sing a song of sixpence,  
make yet another book,  
preach to St. Francis' birds,  
or find heaven in a grain of sand,  
than be a televised entertainer  
gladiating bemusement,  
a tycoon, an industrial magnet  
for mass-man's dollars,  
a robot executing  
whatever executives execute,  
a cog, a round peg in a round hole,  
a cipher, a non-entity  
registered without a protest.

The creative urge is a fire  
that burns without consuming the bush.  
A symbol of man's desire  
it rages like a fever,  
and though better never late  
is better late than never.



*PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS*

A

THOUGH teachers welcome gifted children  
As fellow creatures,  
May the God of gifted children send  
Them gifted teachers.

B

The dancing genes defeat the schemes  
Of best planned parenthood.  
Nature's affinity for the mean  
Strains our fortitude.

C

What a bother  
When the child of a University Woman  
Takes after its father!

## EDUCATION IS A RACE

EDUCATION is a race.

The Kremlin is hammering at the door.  
A Russian's grasp now exceeds his reach—  
Or what's a guided missile for?

"Throw the children into the breach.  
Why let the Communists set the pace?  
Cut out the fads and frills and teach  
The science we need for total war.  
This is urgent,"

said the executive to the scientist  
concocting sky-blue-pink detergent.

"Pile on the work, lest the Russians reap  
A red harvest with a sickle moon.  
Why halve the cake we want to eat?  
Cut out the Shakespeare and save a year,"  
said the politician to the engineer  
designing the chromium trim to make  
next year's model obsolete.



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